

Canadian Radon Database and Mapping Working Group

Terms of Reference

Agreed September 22, 2020

Background

Radon is a colourless, odourless gas that can accumulate in buildings. Radon gas is radioactive and when it enters lungs, its decay products (or 'daughters') can cause DNA damage, leading to lung cancer. In Canada, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer after smoking and kills over 3,000 people per year. Many factors contribute to elevated radon in buildings, including underlying geology and soil composition, building design and construction methods, and the activities of building users (such as opening windows). The result is considerably geographical variability in the radon levels in indoor spaces. While Health Canada's 2012 Cross-Canada Survey of Radon Concentrations in Homes estimated approximately 7 percent of homes exceed the National Radon Guidelines, some locations will have a much higher percentage of buildings with elevated radon. Radon potential maps are an important tool to help people understand the prevalence of elevated radon at the regional, municipal and neighbourhood level. They are an important component of society's response to the challenge of radon and a key component of radon mitigation strategies.

Diverse organizations across Canada are engaged in creating and collecting radon data and maps, including the federal government, provincial government ministries, Centres for Disease Control, the Canadian National Radon Proficiency Program (C-NRPP), Lung Associations and university and independent researchers. Beginning in April 2020, diverse persons with an interest in radon data and mapping from across Canada came together using internet-based meeting software to discuss a variety of technical, logistical, methodological, and legal issues around radon data and mapping. Subsequent meetings were held monthly. This Terms of Reference seeks to formalize this process.

Purpose

This Terms of Reference serves as the guiding document for the Canadian Radon Database and Mapping Working Group ("Radon Mapping Group"). The goals for the Radon Mapping Group are to:

- a. Meet regularly
- b. Share information on current practices and programs
- c. Facilitate discussion, joint problem solving, cooperation, and knowledge creation among members regarding radon mapping

- d. Develop best practices for radon measurements, databases, and maps
- e. Collaborate on standards for consistency within mapping
- f. Facilitate radon data sharing between organizations (including for-profit, non-profit, and government organizations), and
- g. Work towards creating improved and suitably granular national radon maps

It is expected that the Terms of Reference may change and evolve over time and can be changed in accordance with the standard decision-making processes of the Radon Mapping Group.

Membership

Membership in the Radon Mapping Group will be comprised of current participants, which include:

John Drage, Geosciences and Mines Branch, Government of Nova Scotia

Jean-Philippe Drolet, Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique

Michel Gauthier, Health Canada

Colin Gutcher, Health Canada

Brad Harvey, Geological Survey of Canada

Jeffrey Trieu, British Columbia Centre for Disease Control

Anne-Marie Nicol, Simon Fraser University

Noah Quastel, BC Lung Association

Pam Warkentin, Canadian National Radon Proficiency Program and Canadian Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists

The Radon Mapping Group will not compensate members for participation.

New members may be added, subject to consensus-based agreement of existing members.

Members recognize that the Group may need to change and evolve to complete some tasks and projects, especially where attempts are made to codify best practices and standards.

Shared Values

The Radon Mapping Group will aim to create an open and sharing environment that fosters transparency dialogue, creativity, cooperation, and innovation.

Members will work towards concrete outcomes that can be shared with the wider community.

Expectations

Members will conduct themselves to realize the Shared Values.

Members will attend meetings with regularity.

Members will engage in activities and otherwise contribute to the Group, such as conducting background research, preparing materials, offering opinions, sharing experiences and working with other members on projects

Any materials shared with the group will be considered confidential unless otherwise specified.

In the spirit of fostering the Shared Values, members will be free to use and develop ideas shared by the working group, including producing academic and other publications. However, any disclosure of the content of discussions, meeting minutes or activities of the Radon Working Group will require the consultation and consent of each affected member, such as through review of documents intended for publication. Such consent will not be unreasonably withheld, and members should consider balancing privacy concerns with the aims of knowledge production.

Meetings

The Working Group will meet regularly, once every two months, by internet-based meeting platform, except as otherwise agreed by the participants.

Meetings will be conducted in an organic and flexible (rather than rule bound) format aimed at fostering the Shared Values.

Members will create notes of each meeting, with a primary note-taker volunteering for each meeting and collaboration and shared editing using email or online platforms such as Google docs.

Meetings and meeting notes will be confidential except as agreed by the participants.

Decision Making

Participants will aim to make decisions by consensus.

In the event that consensus cannot be reached, an open voting process will be used.